

# CHERAW GAZETTE.

M. MACLEAN EDITOR & PROPRIETOR.

CHERAW, S. C., TUESDAY, MAY 17, 1836.

VOL. I. NO. 27.

Published every Tuesday.

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Extracts from the Speech of Mr. Bell, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives, on the Naval Appropriation Bill.

(CONTINUED.)

It is well known that an unbounded respect for the rights of the States was professed by the original Jackson party; and every measure or practice of the government which tended to consolidation, was denounced as inexpedient and even dangerous. To prove how little regard has been shown by those who now wear the garb of Jacksonism, for the due constitutional rights and independence of the States, it would only be necessary to call to mind the interference of the federal government with the election of Senators by the State Legislatures; but, sir, I may add, that the legislative proceedings of State Assemblies have been interfered with, and many of those bodies have already been reduced to the condition of mere dependent and co-ordinate portions of the great party machinery, by which it is supposed this country may hereafter be governed—the supple and convenient instruments of the Federal Executive, and party interests!

How the pledge of the Jackson party to reform those abuses which, under the late Administration, were said to have brought the patronage of the government in conflict with the freedom of elections, has been redeemed by the party which now controls the course of public affairs, we all know and some of us feel. Instead of an isolated case of such conflict, which now and then was supposed to have taken place during the administration of the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Adams), we now have the practice of such abuses reduced to a system; openly exercised and openly justified by a large portion of the party!

But besides the open violation of these and many other principles of the original Jackson party, what are we to think of the strange, and before unheard of principles avowed by leading members in the majority in this House, in the debate upon this bill? Appropriations without limit as to object or amount are openly vindicated! The infallibility of the Executive is proclaimed; because the people have trusted Gen. Jackson, therefore, we ought to trust him with the whole Treasury! One gentleman (I allude to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Sutherland], who, I am sure, all will admit to be one of the most distinguished, as he is certainly one of the most active and efficient members of the party) declared, that he had no scruples as to the amount of money to be appropriated; he was willing to trust Gen. Jackson with the whole Treasury. That great man, he said, to use his own language, "was known upon the hills and in the valleys;" the people had unlimited confidence in him, and we ought to have the same! These, sir, were the ear, doctrines both new and extraordinary, whatever confidence Gen. Jackson may be entitled to. They are surely not the doctrines of a republic, much less of a party which can justly claim the merit of exclusive devotion to republican principles. Yet these sentiments were distinctly avowed upon his floor, by more than one gentleman, and no member of the party rose in his place to disavow and repudiate them. Even the ancient and famous commonwealth of Virginia, which has long stood the boasted champion of the true republican faith, could furnish no son on that side of the House, who dared to disclaim sentiments so subversive of every principle heretofore held vital to our Constitution. I am far from doing all the individuals composing the majority in this House, the injustice to suppose, that they approve these, or indeed many other principles and practices of the party with which they find themselves connected. I know how difficult it is for individual members to separate themselves from the party with which they act, upon any question whatever which assumes a party complexion. I have often felt the difficulty of such a course myself. I believe, sir, there are many individuals of the party of the majority in this House, who do not accord with the present course of the party to which they belong upon many questions—who cannot long abide their present party connexions; and, sir, if I possessed the power of exorcism upon this occasion, I would bid them instantly come out from among the uncongenial elements and associates with which they are at present united.

But we cannot be surprised at the avowal of strange doctrines by the present majority, when we recollect that the single principle upon which the elections of the present day generally turn, is unlimited devotion not to any particular political creed, but to the party! Accordingly we often find members of this House, and leaders too, who either have no know-

ledge of those principles which have heretofore divided the country, or are so entirely regardless of them, if they know what they are, as, in the same speech—any in the same breath, to avow themselves both restrictionists and latitudinarians, states rights men and consolidationists, thorough democrats and ultra federalists! And yet this is the nature of the association which claims to be the republican party in the United States! I know of no instance of equal absurdity and arrogance in the assumption of names, except the one which recently occurred in Pennsylvania, in which a State Bank took the name of the United States Bank!

Sir, there is no one principle or maxim, as far as I can call to mind, avowed and professed by the original supporters of General Jackson, and which entered largely into the grounds of his success, which has not been evaded or disregarded; and many of the most vital and important of them have been openly, and I regret to say insidiously, trampled under foot in the face of the whole country by the party now uppermost in influence, if not in power.

I beg leave to make a few remarks upon the condition of other branches of the public service. It is not only our fortifications and our navy which have been permitted to remain unarmed and in a state of dilapidation, but I affirm that many of the civil departments of the government are in no better condition; and this I am ready to demonstrate to the House and to the whole country, if proper authority is given for that purpose. Beside the irregularities, abuses, and corruptions which have been shown to exist in the Post Office Department, I affirm that the General Land Office is in a condition scarcely less deplorable. There is neither order, despatch, nor in the case of some of the offices, is there fidelity in the management and administration of that most important and interesting branch of the public service. I affirm that this is true, and would be so, independent of the alleged want of clerical force in the department. The evil exists in many of the great land districts in the interior.

The same thing is substantially true of the Indian department. That branch of the public service has within a few years past grown into an importance four or five fold greater than formerly. The expenditures in this department a few years ago did not exceed some two or three hundred thousand dollars annually; now they are between one and two millions; yet the irregularities and abuses appear to have multiplied in proportion to the magnitude of the public interest connected with it. What I may be asked, are the causes of these extraordinary abuses? The cause is simple and single—the entire incompetency of much the largest number of the officers and agents employed as heads of bureaus or distinct and subordinate offices. It is the want of capacity, of skill, and, in some cases, of every necessary quality. This is the great and decided cause; and the remedy does not exist in new organizations of this or that department, nor in the invention of new checks and restrictions upon the discretion of officers. The remedy for this abuse, like all others, will be found in the removal of the cause of it. Nothing is more important to be understood, and extensively propagated in this country, than this—that no government, however wise and perfect in its form, exists, but may and will be abused and perverted to bad and corrupt ends, whenever it shall fall into the hands of a set of administrators of loose or bad principles. No constitutional or legal enactments can supply the deficiency of ability or fidelity; no checks or regulations can anticipate and defeat the devices of artful and unprincipled office-holders. Neither ability nor purity can be conferred by law. On the other hand, all experience has shown, that under any form of government or of official regulation, however defective, when the public officers are possessed of the attributes of talents and fidelity, the public liberty will be respected—the public prosperity promoted—and the great end of human government successfully carried out.

But there is one mystery connected with the existence of the gross abuses in some branches of the public service, which deserves to be mentioned. How has it happened that these abuses have not only been suffered to exist, but even to increase under an administration so decidedly popular and powerful? When this problem shall be solved to the satisfaction of the public, the remedy will be supplied. The true answer to the question, how these abuses come to exist under such an administration, is, because the administration is such as it is because it is popular. Every man of sound mind and lawful age, knows that the President nor any other being of created existence, can exercise a personal inspection and superintendence over all, or even a tenth part of the most important details of the public service. Yet every important transaction connected with the public service is so managed by the subordinate officers, as to throw the responsibility upon the President. If the delinquent officers, do not do this themselves, their defenders in Congress and out of Congress do not fail, in effect, to fix the responsibility there. Whether in Congress, or in the country, complaint is made of abuse in any branch of the public service, the answer is, eternally, that the charge is meant as an attack upon Gen. Jackson! His great name and popularity are the shield and buckler of every official

delinquent, whether from incompetency or infidelity, from a clerk to the head of a department; from the Register or Receiver of a Land Office, or an Indian Agent, to a Minister Plenipotentiary! The name and services of Gen. Jackson, I repeat, are invoked to shield and cover over, with a mantle, every official transgression or omission, from the highest to the lowest, whenever it suits the interest of party to avail themselves of them. And the people are called upon to rally round—to stand by and defend,—not the individuals arraigned—not the delinquent department, but the President himself, who it is asserted, through a thousand channels, is intended to be struck at and stabbed through the sides of the accused officer or department. The people cannot at once detect the artifices of party. They are jealous of every thing which savors of an attack upon General Jackson, and they in general act upon that suspicion. Those, therefore, who dare, here or elsewhere, to find fault with the course of affairs, upon any ground, instead of finding countenance from those in power, or from the dominant party—instead of being cheered on in the ungracious task of reform, are met on the threshold, with the charge of secret and sinister motives—with Anti-Jacksonism! They are told, that their object is to assail the character of the Hero of New Orleans, and the conqueror of the United States Bank; as if either one or the other of those victories could be of any worth now or hereafter, except to protect the constitution, the country and its liberties—as if those victories could be of any value, if as the price of them we are to surrender that very constitution, those very liberties—those rich and glorious prizes, for which those battles were fought and won. If those who venture to make charges against any department of the public service are not met precisely in this way, they are, at all events, told that General Jackson is the head of the Government—that he is responsible for all the executive branches of the public service, and no attack can be made upon any branch of the service, therefore, without attacking him, and every body knows that he does his duty. A most shameful, egotistical, and pernicious fallacy. But the absurdity of the argument does not prevent it from being constantly interposed. The argument is, that because General Jackson is able, faithful, and patriotic, in the discharge of all his duties, therefore all the subordinate officers of the Government are so likewise. But more; if any one shall reply to all this, and that he means no attack upon General Jackson, that he is willing to exonerate him from any agency in the abuses which are alleged to exist, he is forthwith denounced as a hypocrite—as a dastardly assailant, who wants the courage and independence to make a direct attack. He is dared to come forward like a man, and assail General Jackson as the author of all these abuses—his pride is appealed to—his feelings are chafed to draw him on to utter the fatal denunciation; and the moment he does so, the myrmidons of the party stand ready to back him to pieces! These, sir, are the true causes of the continued abuses in the public service. They are themselves, without doubt, the greatest of all abuses. So long as a great and venerated name may be successfully opposed to all enquiry—to all reform in the public service, so long will abuses continue to multiply. So long as a system of terror and punishment through the agency of the public press shall be successfully practised, abuses will thicken upon us. I have said that the means resorted to suppress enquiry into abuses, are themselves the greatest of all abuses. Sir, they are so. I affirm that they are such as cannot long exist in a free government—for no government in which they exist, for a great while, can be free.

There is another subject, Mr. Chairman, which I feel bound to avail myself of this occasion to notice more particularly than I have yet done. It is another one of that series of pretences and impostures which I have so often alluded to. I refer now to the alleged mischief and danger of terminating an election of President by this House. No subject has been more artfully handled, and portrayed in more alarming colors, in the South and South-West, during the last fall and summer, by the partizans and adherents of the Vice President than this one. None, sir, has produced a more decided effect upon the public mind. It is well known that, in those sections of the Union especially, an election by the House of Representatives was made particularly odious by the representations and denunciations of the election by the House in 1825. It was one of the standing themes of every political declaimer during the last year. The evils of such a catastrophe as another election by the House has been a subject of constant regret and lamentation, in the columns of every leading journal in the interest of Mr. Van Buren. I should not be far wrong if I were to say that two thirds of all the honest and sober minded planters, and farmers, in the whole South, and South-West, who are disposed to support the nomination of the Baltimore Convention, would assign as the reason of their course, if they were asked, their horror of an election by the House of Representatives, and their fears, that by supporting any other candidate they will only contribute to bring about this result. Knowing the extent of this feeling, the partizans of Mr. Van Buren have, in many districts, rested his cause entirely upon this point. A French war was described as an infinitely less evil than an election by the House of Representatives. It has been, and is now asserted by the

zealous and interested advocates of the Vice President, throughout the country, that an election by the House would be carried by intrigue, bribery and corruption; and that the voice of the people will be unheeded in the contest. The Government journal printed in this city (the Globe) has of late uniformly represented an election by the House of Representatives as the greatest calamity which could befall the country. I propose now to unveil the course of the party in power upon this subject, and to expose their artifices and insincerity.

It is very well known to those who look beyond the surface—who pay only a regard to professions, and examine the real motives of human action as they are exhibited in the course of the present self-styled republican party that they advocate the propriety and necessity of adhering to the practice of nominating a President and Vice President by caucus or convention, not for the purpose of preventing an election by the House of Representatives, but upon the ground that, as they allege, in no other way can a party be kept together; or the power and patronage of the government be secured to their own members or followers. This is the true motive, and this the true secret of the extraordinary efforts and influences which have been made and brought to bear on the people of late, in order to give popularity and permanence to the practice of such nominations. To avoid the evils of an election by the House is the professed object of the party. That has been the great political bugbear which has been held up and paraded through the country, to frighten the people into an acquiescence in the nomination of such a body as the late Baltimore Convention. The truth is, that without the benefit of the terrors created by the frightful image of an election of the House, which has been so constantly kept before the eyes of the people, the nomination of the Baltimore Convention would have found no countenance. And this, sir, is the solution of the mystery—here lies the secret of the continued and marked neglect with which the repeated recommendations of the President in relation to such an amendment of the Constitution as would hereafter prevent an election of President and Vice President by the House and secure it to the people, has been treated by the party. The history of this proposition is remarkable, and highly instructive as well as curious.

It cannot be forgotten, that from 1825 until the commencement of the present Administration, this proposition was a favorite policy of the party which brought Gen. Jackson into power. The whole subject was discussed both in Congress and in the public journals. When Gen. Jackson was elected by the people, no one doubted but that one of the first acts which would distinguish the action of Congress would be, to recommend such an amendment to the States for their adoption. General Jackson in his first Message, urged the subject upon the attention of Congress in the strongest and most persuasive language. In his second and in each succeeding annual Message, he has done the same thing. Regarding the discussion of the subject as having commenced in 1825, it is now upwards of ten years since it has been before the country in the most imposing form—in the annual Messages of the President. The arguments and language of the Message upon this subject are worthy of particular notice; and I must ask leave to refer to them. [Here Mr. Bell read several passages from the Messages of the President upon this subject, all of which went to show how important it was in the opinion of the President such an amendment of the Constitution should be made.] Well, sir, what has been the result—the effect of these repeated and urgent recommendations? In the early part of the administration, many earnest and well meant efforts were made to get this House to take up, and act upon this subject. Propositions in a variety of shapes were presented; and it has been a part of the regular forms of the House, at the beginning of every session, to appoint a select committee upon this subject—but, sir, the truth cannot be disguised or disputed, that those efforts were the efforts of individuals only; that the regular annual appointment of special committees has been but a mere form; and at no time could the party be rallied in favor of the proposition. There was always somewhere, and from some motive, a power and an influence which thwarted the action of the House upon this question.

Soon after the opening of the last session of Congress, this subject began to excite increased interest, and certainly demanded prompt attention from those who seriously and honestly believed an election by the House of Representatives ought to be avoided. It was then, sir, that it became manifest that the Jackson party would be divided upon the subject of his successor; and an honorable Senator from Tennessee was brought to the notice of the country as a candidate for the Presidency, and supported under such circumstances, and upon principles which forbid the hope that his friends would surrender his pretensions to the man who it was foreseen would be the favorite of the contemplated Baltimore Convention. This was a conjuncture to test the principles of the party upon this subject. The danger of a division in the ranks of the party in power was manifest. That an election by the House would be a result of this state of things, could not certainly be foreseen; but all must have seen that such a result might take place. As early as the 10th of December, 1834, a Select Committee was appointed to consider of and report upon this subject. Special care was taken to appoint a clear majority upon the committee who were known to

have avowed themselves favorable to an amendment of the constitution, which would exclude the election from the House. The following gentlemen composed the committee: Messrs. Gilmer, Archer, Binney, Beardsley, Gorham, Johnson of Kentucky, Speight, Hubbard, and Carr. Five of these gentlemen are the known supporters of General Jackson, and of Mr. Van Buren as his successor; and all were understood when the committee was appointed, to be in favor of the recommendation of the President, which it was their exclusive and special duty to consider and report upon. The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Gilmer of Georgia, though not a supporter of the administration, was known to be a gentleman of great sincerity, talents and energy; and he was also known to be a zealous advocate of the propositions submitted to the Committee. I have a personal knowledge that unusual efforts were made by the Chairman of the Committee, and by various other individuals to prevail upon the Committee to agree upon some report at an early day of the session, that it might be before the House and acted upon before the close of the session. The friends of Judge White especially, fearing the use which would be made against him of the argument that by dividing the party the election might be brought into the House, exerted themselves in every fair and honorable way to procure a decision upon the question by Congress. Several of the members of this Committee, who had always avowed themselves in favor of the measure were privately appealed to; but all was vain. The answer was, they could not agree upon the details of the measure—no, two, it was said, could agree. Now, sir, every member of the least experience in legislation knows, that upon any important question whatever involving details, two men can rarely be found to agree upon all of them. It is notorious, that no Committee of this House would ever report upon any subject of importance, if a majority of its members were expected to unite upon the details of it. All that can be expected in such cases is, that a majority shall agree upon the principle of the Report. The House is always expected to alter the details according to the views of the majority. It was no adequate excuse to say, they could not agree upon details. I will not be so unjust as to say, that all the members of the committee who had before that time professed a desire to see the Constitution amended, in this respect, wilfully combined to prevent any action upon the subject last session. Of a committee of nine members; and six only of them being friendly to the principle of a measure, any two of the six were able to defeat any action upon the subject. A report from the committee, I feel warranted from the circumstances, in asserting, was defeated by the management of some portion of the members of it, who were, at the same time, avowed advocates of the expediency of such an amendment of this Constitution.

The farther history of this question is this: Mr. Gilmer, the Chairman of the Committee, failing in all his efforts to get the committee to make a report in any shape, came into the House on the 31st of January, and asked that the committee might be discharged from the further consideration of the subject, on the ground that they could come to no agreement thereupon; and on the same day he was permitted to lay a Resolution, containing a proposition for an amendment of the Constitution in relation to the election of President and Vice President, upon the table. I well remember that at first, one of the prominent members of the committee and who was also a prominent member of the dominant party, refused to give his consent that Mr. Gilmer should even lay his Resolution upon the table; but he became ashamed of his conduct, and withdrew his opposition. Thus the subject was before the House; and it was at any time in the power of the majority to take it up, and decide upon it. On the 13th of Feb. Mr. Gilmer finding that it would not do to postpone the subject any longer, without losing sight of it altogether during the session, moved to suspend the rules of the House in order to proceed to the consideration of his Resolution. Against this motion there were only fifty-six votes, & of these thirty-seven were the known supporters of Mr. Van Buren for the Presidency; or, in other words, of a nomination by a Convention; and fifteen of these thirty-seven were members of the N. York delegation. The resolution was that day taken up and read a second time, and postponed to the 19th of the month, but it was superseded by other business until the 25th of February; when Mr. Wilde of Georgia moved that all the orders of the day be postponed, for the purpose of considering this subject. Upon this motion there were 112 yeas, and 92 nays; of the latter, 39 were supporters of Mr. Van Buren, and 24 of them members of the New York delegation. The subject that day underwent considerable discussion, but the House came to no decision upon it. On the 27th February Mr. Gilmer again moved that his resolution be taken up; and on taking the question the vote stood, yeas 99, nays 104. Of the yeas, 60 were for Mr. Van Buren, and 24 of them from New York. On the same day, however, at a later hour, Mr. Gilmer's resolution came up in the regular order of business; a motion was made to dispose of it finally, by laying it on the table. In favor of this motion there was only 38 yeas, and 30 of them were friends of Mr. Van Buren and 13 of that number from New York. After further debate upon the resolution, a motion was made by Mr. Vanderpool of New York, that the House adjourn—evidently with a view to evade the question up-

on the resolution. Upon this motion the votes stood, yeas 59, nays 112. Of the yeas, 49 were for Mr. Van Buren, and 20 of them from New York. The subject was further debated, but no decision was arrived at. Now, sir, upon a view of all these circumstances, can there remain the shadow of a doubt that this question was wilfully, designedly evaded at the last session, by the very party which now professes to hold an election by the House in such utter abhorrence. The neglect of Congress to act upon this subject, prior to the last session, might admit of some apology. There were so many exciting and important questions of another kind, continually arising to absorb the chief attention of Congress; and besides, there had been no prospect of an election by the House until the commencement of last session. But there is justification for the course of the party at the last session upon this subject. It is but too clear that the party in favor of Mr. Van Buren for the succession, determined to have the full benefit of the form which existed in the country of an election by the House, in compelling a submission to the decrees of the Baltimore Convention. Else why was it, that not the slightest notice was taken by that vigilant guardian of every thing that concerns the party, the Globe, of the question presented by Mr. Gilmer's resolution when it was under discussion. Not one paragraph was penned during the sitting of Congress upon the importance of amending the Constitution so as to prevent an election of the President by the House of Representatives. Why, sir, was not the Committee which had charge of this subject, rated for their negligence and omission in not reporting upon the subject submitted to them? Why were not the usual denunciations uttered through that organ against those members of the party who voted in every instance to prevent the consideration, and to defeat altogether the resolution of Mr. Gilmer?

Sir, a large portion of the party upon that question showed that they were opposed to a measure which Gen. Jackson had earnestly urged upon Congress in every annual message since he came into office. Why were they not pointed out and denounced as anti-Jackson? There can be but one answer to this question: It was no offence to any one to oppose that proposition at the last session. That this question was designed to be blinked, was manifest to me, from the course of particular members—a course which I could account for upon no other ground. When Mr. Gilmer's resolution was under discussion, at one time, there appeared to be a serious determination on the part of the House to carry it. My colleague (Mr. Polk), who is now the presiding officer of this House, and who cannot be charged with a disposition to thwart the views of those in power, made a speech which was evidently intended to put an end to the further consideration of the subject at that session. He complained that the time was too short to give the subject that examination which its importance demanded. He thought he had, with the slight attention he had given the resolution, detected an error; and there might be many more. He dwelt emphatically upon the importance of not permitting the resolution to go from the House in an improper shape, "for then it would be gone in favor." When he concluded, a gentleman who sat by him rose to move, that the resolution be laid on the table, but the Chair gave the floor to another member. Now, sir, farther delay and further time to examine into the details of the resolution could only be had by dropping the question until another Congress. That was evident to all. But, Mr. Chairman, the party are not only answerable for the failure of the proposition at the last session, but they are responsible for its failure at the only time which has arisen within the last ten years, or which will probably arise within the next ten, when a fair prospect existed of succeeding in it. Such was the anxiety of the members of the opposition that this plea of the danger of an election by the House should be taken away from the party known to be in favor of Mr. Van Buren, in sustaining the contemplated nomination of that gentleman by a Convention at Baltimore, that many of them who had always before that time been opposed to such an amendment of the Constitution as was proposed, were willing then to see it adopted. It will be found that more than fifty members of the opposition voted to sustain Mr. Gilmer's Resolution; and there cannot be a doubt, that if the party in power had not deserted their own principles upon this occasion, the proposition would have been carried by the requisite majority. We have seen the same question treated with the same neglect, so far, at the present session. According to custom, we have a Select Committee upon the subject; but half the session is past by, and we have no report from it. But I am free to say, sir, that I regard the course of the committee, at this session, of but little consequence. If we were now to adopt a proposition for amending the Constitution in relation to the election of President and Vice President, it can hardly be calculated that the legislatures of three fourths of the States could be got to act upon the question, in time to operate upon the next presidential election. There might have been some prospect of a favorable result if the committee had reported at the beginning of the session; but it is now too late to hope for success to any such measure. There are too many interests still combined to defeat it.